Part One – SQ3R Method of Reading Chapters 12, 13 and 14

**1) What is meant by divergent and convergent phases of question selection in evaluation?**

-Cronbach (1982) identified divergent questions an extensive list of potentially important questions and concerns, which arise from many sources. The convergent list is one which contains the most critical questions which need to be answered.

-Divergent phase consists of little quantitative data. It is mainly informal conversations, casual observations, are broad in nature and arises from a number of sources including:

* Stakeholders- articulation of their issues and questions is imperative, increases the validity of the study, serves democratic and social purposes. This process includes collecting data in ways which are meaningful to the stakeholder, uses education, and a direct non judgmental approach.
* Use of evaluation models, frameworks and approaches- stimulate questions which may not be generated from other sources.
* Theory and research in the field.
* Standards of practice.
* Consultants who can lack program expertise but have valuable evaluation expertise
* Judgment of the evaluator.
* Suggestions from multiple sources.

-Convergent phase includes reducing the variables for budgeting purposes, decreasing complexity and downsizing the evaluation to eliminate too much information. The stakeholders are involved in the final decision making process of which evaluation questions are to be answered.

**2) What processes are used to determine the final evaluation questions?**

-Cronbach and others (1980) recommend “simultaneous consideration to the criteria” (p.247) limiting uncertainty in abundance of information, cost and leverage with consensus of the stakeholders. These questions developed are tentative to allow for potential contextual factors which may intervene but do not lose sight of the importance of the evaluation questions to be answered. Six criteria are identified by these evaluators:

* Who wants to know and who will use the information. Who will be limited by not having the question answered? A critical audience varies with the contextual elements.
* Would an answer reduce the uncertainty present at the time or provide information not available at this time?
* Would the answer to the question yield important information?
* Is the question of passing interest and not focused on critical dimensions?
* Would the scope of the evaluation be seriously limited if the questions were not asked?
* Is it financially and human resource wise to answer this question?

**3) How are absolute and relative standards applied in evaluation?**

-Absolute standards are ones which are not relative in nature. They describe a particular level of achievement.

- Relative standards provide comparisons and demarcate significant differences.

**4) What are important considerations for focusing and designing an evaluation?**

-Maintaining flexibility, non linear in nature

-The evaluator needs to maintain a clear understanding of the purpose and role of the evaluation.

-Designs chosen vary with the evaluation question. It is most common for evaluation questions to be descriptive.

-Several designs or combinations can be used to provide more relevant answers to the evaluation questions.

- Early recognition is given to the need for comparison groups, random assignment, data collection and timing.

- Well developed evaluation designs have the ability enhance communication between stakeholders and the evaluator.

-Appropriate sources of information must be sought and may include primary and secondary sources.

-Data may be obtained from existing sources such as public documents, program administrators, policy makers, program funders etc. rather than collecting new data. Data available must be critically scrutinized for their applicability to the evaluation question in order to avoid distorting the original intent of the question.

-Ethical considerations must be applied to the design process including attention to confidentiality.

-Appropriate data collection methods and instruments must be identified, applicable to the questions and in consultation with the client of advisory group. Appropriate sampling measures must be chosen.

- Clients are involved in data collection.

-Timeliness for the data collection are needed to ensure data is collected at the appropriate times.

-Interpreting the data should include dissemination of the data to evaluation client and other key audiences to illicit their opinions on the findings. Interpretation needs to take into account multiple perspectives.

-Reporting the results requires identification of the appropriateness and the timeliness of the report and in what form it will be generated.

- Tools such as the Gant and PERT charts are used to estimate, portray and manage complex studies.

- Monetary costs such as salary for the evaluator, consultant fees, travel as well as the non monetary costs must be accurately portrayed.

-Agreements with clearly defined language are needed, including statements of Guiding Principles.

**5) On what basis, are data collection methods chosen?**

Choices of data collection are made by considering:

-The evaluation question

-The necessary information

-Appropriateness of sampling strategies

-Appropriate sources of information for multiple measures

-Procedures developed for data collection

-Maintenance of appropriate checks

-Appropriateness of the statistical design

-Interpretation of the results

6) **What considerations are warranted when identifying an appropriate data collection method for evaluation?**

No one approach is always appropriate. Method chosen is based on the evaluation question, questions one is trying to answer, context of the evaluation and the values and perspectives of the evaluators.

Part Two- Responses to Reading Chapters 12, 13 and 14

**1) What does this chapter information mean to me as I fulfill my various roles?**

**-** The divergent and convergent phases of evaluation can be analogous to other uses

beyond the evaluation realm.

* The information presented in these chapters provides me with tools such as the Gant and PERT Chart to potentially use or suggest to others who are involved in the evaluation of complex projects.
* The continuation of the case study provides a good example of the application of the material presented in the reading.
* The section on absolute and relative standards provides me with a new terminology to describe evaluation standards.
* I feel the questions on page 244 regarding reflections of the evaluator are useful to incorporate into a variety of evaluation settings.
* Reinforces the costs associated with programming and the importance of choosing appropriate personnel to carry out the evaluation processes.
* Reminds me of previous experiences where data was collected but never utilized. Program staff became disillusioned and lacked interest in continuing to generate data which seemingly served no valuable purpose in their opinion.
* Illustrates the importance of good communication for all involved in evaluation and reaffirms the need to seek various opinions regarding data collection methods.

**2) How can I use this information to address a problem or issue in school, workplace or elsewhere?**

**-** The section on choice of methods for data collection can potentially serve the purpose

being used as a guide to the number of choices available for data collection.

-In addition, the information can be shared with others who express interest in evaluation.

For example, our program has a mentorship project which collects data from various

sources. I could suggest the use of the tools presented in the chapters for their approval

and use.

**3) How does this advance my abilities as participant in program evaluation?**

I feel I have gained a greater understanding of the variety of data collection methods and tools used to support program evaluation. This information once again reinforces how critical stakeholder engagement and ongoing communication is. As I think of my past experiences in this area, I recognize there were a number of ways which I could have improved my practice in program evaluation ie. working more collaboratively on identifying key components of the evaluation including data collection and defining more succinctly the evaluation questions to pose.